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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: INTERFAITH DIALOGUE -- INDONESIANS SUPPORT A
BILATERAL EMPHASIS

REF: JAKARTA 1262

Classified By: DCM Ted Osius, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesian officials remain hopeful that a proposed interfaith dialogue with the U.S. will include a strong bilateral component. During his June meeting with the Secretary, FM Wirajuda expressed his strong preference for a bilateral interfaith dialogue within the context of the developing U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership. If the Department still prefers a regional approach after reviewing the Indonesian position, Mission would pursue creative proposals for a possible joint November event that would address GOI equities. END SUMMARY.

SUPPORT FOR A BILATERAL DIALOGUE

¶2. (SBU) In a June meeting in Washington, FM Wirajuda told the Secretary he wanted to include a bilateral interfaith dialogue in the developing U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership. After President Obama's Cairo speech, the GOI also expressed an interest in serving as a bridge between the Muslim world and the West. Mission believes an interfaith dialogue with a strong bilateral component could help advance the goals of the President's Cairo speech.

¶3. (C) Interfaith dialogue is an essential GOI foreign policy tool. Eager to move forward, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU) officials told us that the GOI is willing to host the first bilateral U.S.-Indonesia interfaith dialogue. The GOI already engages in similar bilateral interfaith dialogues with the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden and Russia. For the U.S., a joint bilateral dialogue with the largest Muslim-majority country in the world by population could be a key element of our efforts to engage Muslims internationally.

REGIONAL INTERFAITH "FATIGUE"

¶4. (C) We have discussed forms that a dialogue might take with the GOI and an interfaith dialogue with a regional emphasis duplicates existing GOI efforts. The GOI already has plans to participate in several regional interfaith dialogues in 2009 including on the margins of: the ASEAN and Europe Meeting (ASEM) in South Korea in October; the Regional Interfaith Dialogue in Australia also in October; and, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting in the Philippines in December. DEPLU officials have told us they are concerned that a regional focus to any U.S.-Indonesian initiative could lead to "dialogue fatigue" and lessen the impact of commitments they believe were made by the Secretary and the Foreign Minister in their recent meeting.

NEXT STEPS

15. (C) Recognizing that interfaith dialogue is a White House initiative outlined in President Obama's Cairo address, Mission will pursue further discussions with DEPLU officials to work towards a November event that coincides with a potential presidential visit. Mission recommends that the number of regional participants be minimized and that there be sufficient and equal representation from the United States and Indonesia, in order to reflect a jointly-hosted event. We understand that USG funding may also be available to support the travel of U.S. and possibly third-country participants. If there is going to be third-country participation, Mission will engage in further discussions with the GOI to assuage any concerns about costs that would be incurred with such an element.

HUME